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INVESTING IN PEOPLE

(Health)

27.5 M Pinoys have no sanitary toilets, 13 M without access to clean water - USAID

(Source: newsflash.org – 3/19/08)

At least 27.5 million Filipinos have no sanitary toilets in their homes and some 13 million do not have access to clean water, according to a World Bank and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) study.

The inadequate and substandard waste facilities have led to 11,338 deaths from diarrhea every year, or 31 persons a day, most of whom are children, the study added.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago asked the proper Senate committee to look into the deplorable state of hygiene and sanitation in the country in aid of legislation.

In filing Senate Resolution No. 326, Santiago cited the WB and USAID study, “Economic Impact of Sanitation in the Philippines.”

“The study noted that only 3.3 percent of Filipino houses were connected to sewers leading to treatment facilities, and that the rest of the dirty household water, or about 95 percent of liquid waste, end up polluting rivers and seas,” read the resolution.

The study said officials from the Department of Health and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources have disclosed that water-borne diseases cost the government P77.8 billion per year in terms of premature deaths, health-care expenses, lost wages and adverse impact on the environment.

“Even the country’s potential to attract tourists is heavily affected by poor sanitation, since tourists stay away from holiday destinations that they suspect to be unsanitary. Improving sanitation could help the country raise its revenues from tourism by about \$40 million and help achieve its target of five million tourists by 2010,” read the resolution.

The WB and USAID said the alarming problem on hygiene and sanitation has serious impacts on health, quality of water for households and commercial users, fisheries, groundwater extraction and crops.

“Such poor hygiene and sanitation facilities and practices continue to be detrimental to the lives and health of Filipinos, destroy the environment, and cost the country billions of pesos in lost work and foregone tourism opportunities,” read the resolution.

The Constitution requires the state to protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them, Santiago said.

Santiago also filed Senate Resolution No. 323 to inquire into the alarming rise of dengue cases in the country and determine what more could be done to prevent the spread of the disease.

“Health officials and communities should win the war against dengue, especially with the mosquito-borne illness now becoming a year-round occurrence,” she said, quoting Dr. Soe Nyunt-U, World Health Organization representative to the Philippines.

Santiago said the WHO official expressed alarm over the rise of dengue cases in Metro Manila and in other cities during the dry months of January and February.

Dengue cases are usually up during the rainy season, she added.

Dr. Eric Tayag, director of the Department of Health’s National Epidemiology Center, said dengue cases in the Philippines went up to an all-time high of 45,380 in 2007. While the 2007 figures were the highest on record since 1992, the number of deaths that year, 416, did not surpass the 1998 record of 814.

The DOH also reported 929 dengue cases in 19 hospitals in Metro Manila last January, with Manila having the highest incidence rate, with 204 cases.

Quezon City ranked second with 157, while Caloocan and Pasig cities had 112 and 92 cases, respectively.

It used to be that the dengue cycle was every three years, but it was no longer true in the Philippines and the significant rise in the number of cases was affecting the population as a whole, the WHO official said.

The DOH said dengue had become a year-round threat due to rising temperatures and the unpredictable weather that had been bringing rains in the normally dry months of the year. – [Aurea Calica](#)